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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 68/NO. 12 MARCH 29, 2004

INSIDE

Workers, youth in Sweden protest hospital closures

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Build April 25 march in Washington, D.C.

All out to defend a woman's right to choose abortion!

We urge you to join with other supporters of a woman's right to choose in building a massive turnout for the April 25 March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the demonstration, its sponsors state, is "to ensure that all women have the right to choose to have or not to have children, with reproductive health options that are safe, affordable, and accessible." Tens of thousands of people from around the country will be converging on Washington to defend the fundamental rights women have gained over the last decades.

Pathfinder supersaver sale pp. 6-7

EDITORIAL

The march is sponsored by major women's rights organizations across the country. Dozens of other groups, from student organizations on university campuses to labor unions, have en-

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Militant/Hilda Cuzco

More than 50,000 people marched in Washington, D.C., in April 1995 action defending women's right to choose. Today, supporters of women's rights around the country are working to ensure a massive turnout for the April 25 march on Washington.

Washington threatens Jamaica and elected head of Haiti gov't

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

With U.S. and other imperialist troops patrolling the streets of Port-au-Prince and other Haitian cities, Washington has cobbled together an "interim" regime to replace the elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The Haitian leader was shanghaied by U.S. armed forces and flown out of the country to the Central African Republic on February 29 as ultrarightist forces took over much of the country.

When Aristide denounced his forced exile by Washington and announced his plans to travel to Jamaica, a neighbor of Haiti, U.S. officials issued warnings against

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Cuban Five appeal U.S. gov't frame-up

BY SETH GALINSKY

MIAMI—Five Cuban revolutionaries who have been in prison in the United States since 2001 on frame-up conspiracy charges took their case to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals at a March 10 hearing here.

Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, and Ramón Labañino are serving from 15 years to a double life term. They were arrested in 1998 and convicted in a June 2001 frame-up trial of conspiracy to commit espionage, to act as unregistered foreign agents, and—in

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Minnesota bus drivers walk out over health coverage

BY BOB SORENSEN

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Some 2,200 bus drivers, mechanics, and other transport workers have gone on strike here against a company plan to hike the costs of health insurance for workers currently employed and to eliminate coverage for future hires. Yes, *all* coverage.

The workers set up their picket lines on March 4 after rejecting a Twin Cities Metro Transit offer by a 94 percent margin two weeks earlier. The strikers are members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local

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Venezuelan youth launch campaign to build 2005 Caracas world youth festival

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

BARQUISIMETO, Venezuela—"Organizing to host and build the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas in August 2005 is now a central task of the Youth of the Fifth Republic Movement," said Tania D'Amelio, national coordinator of the organization.

D'Amelio was addressing nearly 400 delegates March 12 at the opening here of the First National Patriotic Council of the Youth of the Fifth Republic Movement (JVR). This was the founding congress of the youth organization of the Fifth Republic Movement, the party led by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez.

Activities to build an anti-imperialist world youth festival will be linked to resistance to the drive by the U.S.-backed opposition here to overthrow Venezuela's elected government, the JVR leader said. "Venezuelan youth have been on the front lines of the campaign to unmask the megafraud of the opposition in the so-called referendum to recall Chávez," D'Amelio told the delegates. They were likewise on the frontlines of the struggles that defeated an April 2002 military coup and a bosses' "strike" a year ago, both aimed at toppling the government.

On March 2, Venezuela's National

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U.S. threatens Jamaica, elected president of Haiti

Reuters/Eliana Aponte

Supporters of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide protest March 8 in Port-au-Prince in front of U.S. Marines, demanding he be restored to his elected post.

Continued from front page

both the Haitian leader and the Jamaican government, implying that they should be blamed for any "instability" in Haiti caused by imperialist occupation troops or the rightist groups. Aristide was under armed guard throughout his exile in the Central African Republic. Speaking out from that country, he condemned his treatment at the hands of U.S. officials and soldiers, and called for "peaceful resistance" to the U.S.-led occupation.

In a March 13 phone interview with *New York Times* reporter Michael Wines—the authorities did not allow an interview in person—the deposed president spoke about the February 29 events.

As rightist forces advanced on the capital, Aristide said, U.S. ambassador James Foley and other officials had told him "it was a matter of hours—either I leave, or there will be bloodshed." The Haitian president was then taken to the airport, where he was "surrounded by military well armed…. It wasn't necessary for them to say a word." He said he felt he had no choice but to get on the U.S.-chartered plane.

"They put you on the plane, they left with you, and they flew 20 hours without telling you where you were going," he said. That day, the U.S. Marines began arriving in Haiti.

According to the *Times,* Foley asserted that Aristide's trip to Jamaica and his "return to the Caribbean would risk further destabilizing Haiti by emboldening his followers to resist the transition to a new government."

Foley then added, "It must be said that Jamaican authorities are taking a certain risk and a certain responsibility." The Haitian leader's presence, he said, risked "destabiliz[ing] a very fragile and suffering country at the very moment when the international community is just beginning to lay the foundation and the new Haitian government is just beginning to be formed."

U.S.-led patrols target working people

Aristide's supporters in Port-au-Prince have been the main target of the occupying forces' patrols. According to a March 13 Reuters report, the Marines "have fought half-a-dozen gun battles with suspected Aristide militants since they landed here hours after the former president left the country on Feb. 29." In the first two weeks of March they shot dead several people in Port-au-Prince, including a taxi driver who failed to stop at a roadblock. The Haitian police have killed a number of people as well.

Reuters reported that on March 7 up to 10,000 people, mostly residents of the slums and other Aristide backers, demonstrated in Port-au-Prince to denounce the occupation and demand the restoration of the elected president.

Although the occupying forces are "multinational," it is the U.S. Marines that are heading most of the probes into the working-class areas of Port-au-Prince.

Army Gen. James Hill, head of the U.S. Southern Command, told reporters March 10 that more than 2,400 troops are on the ground as part of the so-called Multinational Interim Force commanded by U.S. officers. They include 1,600 U.S. Marines, along with 516 French, 328 Chilean, and 52 Canadian soldiers, with 400 more arriving within the week."

The foreign troops, said Hill, are conducting "presence patrols" with the Haitian national police to begin disarming anyone without a weapons permit.

Hill said the troops are "establishing the required conditions for the arrival of a more robust UN-led multinational force."

U.S. officials have kept the military leaders who toppled the elected government at arm's length. In a March 6 visit to Port-au-Prince, General Hill said that Guy Phillipe, the most prominent coup plotter, "is still in the city and we are still looking for him to lay down his arms."

In the capital city the rightist forces that carried out the coup have stepped aside for the U.S.-led forces. The rightists remain in control of a number of other cities.

Army Maj. Richard Crusan told reporters that "Special Forces from the U.S. Southern Command in Florida arrived at rebel bases of Cap-Haitien, on Haiti's north coast; the western city of Gonaives; and possibly other locations across the country."

Washington organized a seven-person "council of wise men" as a fig leaf to give the appearance that Haitian forces were organizing a new government. The council, made up in its majority of opponents of Aristide, announced in early March that it had "chosen" Gérard Latortue as prime minister to replace Yvon Neptune of Aristide's Lavalas Family Party, who stayed on to help with the transition.

"I come with all my impartiality, with no political party," Latortue told reporters on his arrival in Port-au-Prince. Echoing U.S. officials, he said disarmament of the conflicting forces would be a priority.

Flew in from Florida

Latortue, a businessman, left Haiti in the 1960s during the U.S.-backed dictatorship of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier. He returned to serve as foreign minister in the civilian government of Leslie Manigat, established in 1988 in the aftermath of a popular uprising that ousted Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. After just four months in office Manigat was overthrown by a right-wing military coup.

The new prime minister said he would appoint Herard Abraham, a former general, as head of Haiti's security operations. "The move is "likely to placate armed rebels, many of whom were members of the Haitian army before it was disbanded by Mr. Aristide," the *New York Times* reported.

Abraham has called for the reconstitution of the Haitian armed forces, disbanded by Aristide in 1995 as a favor to Washington. U.S. officials have stated that they oppose reestablishing the army, and that Washington will instead build up the national police and coast guard, which collaborates with U.S. Coast Guard efforts to detain Haitian refugees at sea who are trying to reach U.S. territory.

According to media reports, the former Haitian army officers who played a prominent part in the revolt released a number of their henchmen in the hours following Aristide's departure. Among those released, reported the *Chicago Tribune*, were former military officers Hebert Valmond, Jean-Claude Duperval, and Carl Dorelien. All had been jailed for their part in the reign of terror under the generals' regime imposed after a 1991 coup against the first Aristide government. In 1994 some 20,000 U.S. troops intervened and reinstalled Aristide on Washington's terms.

Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, the most prominent military leaders of the recent coup, had been convicted of crimes by Haitian courts under Aristide's administration. Philippe was exiled after the exposure of his role in several attempted coups against President René Preval, an Aristide supporter who governed from 1996 to 2000. Chamblain was sentenced in absentia to life in prison for the 1993 murder of a Haitian businessman. A Haitian court also found him responsible for the 1994 killings of about 25 Aristide supporters in a seaside slum in Gonaives, Haiti's fourth-largest city. John Kerry, the all-but-official Democratic Party candidate in the 2004 presidential race, has tried to score points against his Republican opponent on the Haiti situation, saying that unlike President Bush he would have "sent an international force to protect" Aristide, according to the March 7 *New York Times*."I would have been prepared to send troops immediately, period," said Kerry, criticizing U.S. president George Bush for withholding aid from Aristide and then pressuring him to leave.

"Look, Aristide was no picnic, and he did a lot of things wrong," said Kerry, echoing the White House. However, he said, not backing the regime with U.S. troops sends "a terrible message to the region, democracies, and it's shortsighted."

General Hill stated March 10 that the role of the U.S. troops is to secure key sites in Port-au-Prince, assist with the delivery of "humanitarian assistance," and participate in "the repatriation of any Haitian migrants interdicted at sea."

A February 29 Associated Press dispatch from Miami stated that 336 Haitians had been taken into custody the day before, "bringing to 867 the number of Haitians returned in the past week to the strife-torn Caribbean nation." The report added, "the Coast Guard is patrolling the waters around Haiti with ships and aircraft."

THE MILITANT

Defend a woman's right to choose

The order by the U.S. Justice Department demanding medical records from Planned Parenthood is the latest in the bipartisan effort to undermine a woman's right to choose abortion. The 'Militant' explains why this right is vital for all working people and covers the struggles to defend it. Don't miss a single issue!

January 2003 pro-choice vigil at Supreme Court celebrates 30 years since *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Workers in Sweden: 'No hospital closings'

BY DAG TIRSÉN

GOTHENBURG, Sweden—In recent months this country has witnessed a rise in local actions to defend public hospitals and health-care centers that are threatened with closure. The protests have included marches of 10,000 people in Alingsås and thousands of people in Oskarshamn, Västervik, and Norrköping. In greater Stockholm, demonstrations have been organized against hospital closures in Norrtälje and Södertälje. There have been protest meetings around Gothenburg since the end of 2003, and angry residents occupied three different health-care clinics here in February and March.

Government authorities in two Gothenburg districts say that a range of facilities must be shut in order to meet their target of cutting 80 million kroner, or US$10.5 million, from health expenditure. Meanwhile, all over Sweden local governments are slashing funding for social programs, citing a 2000 national law that outlaws deficits in their budgets. Even where they do not claim a budget shortfall, city officials argue that the closures are necessary to allow for a margin of operation.

The local radio and newspapers in Gothenburg are covering this so-called health-care crisis almost daily, along with the protests the cutbacks have sparked.

Protests in Gothenburg

On February 28 some 2,000 people marched in Uddevalla, a city near here whose hospital is threatened with closure or drastic budget cuts. Hundreds have also marched in the Gothenburg suburbs of Hammarkullen and Tynnered. Two hundred mostly elderly people attended a March 19 protest meeting in Kortedala, a third suburb of Gothenburg where one of the threatened health clinics is located. Many participants took leaflets and posters to build a planned city-wide march in the center of Gothenburg.

In all, current plans call for the closure of five health-care centers here, and the merger of a further seven clinics into three. Such steps would have grave consequences for people living around each facility. An open letter signed by 87 doctors working in those areas states that if the closures are implemented, the remaining centers, which are already overcrowded, will not be able to provide treatment for all the patients left without a local clinic.

The attack on public, affordable health care—which for most of the postwar decades has been more comprehensive in Sweden than in many imperialist countries—is part of a drive to cut back social spending across the board.

The imposition of tight expenditure controls on local government by Stockholm—implemented through cuts in their allocations, year after year—is a favored mechanism of the Swedish rulers for carrying this out. All over the country the regional governments, or *Landstings*, have declared themselves in a budgetary bind and under pressure from the federal government to cut spending.

The slump in the stock market has added to the fiscal crisis. Some 12 percent of the total Landsting deficit is blamed on the decline in value of government pension funds invested there.

A heavy drain on the Landstings' budgets has also been their drive to sign contracts with private companies to run hospitals and health clinics. Although these are private businesses, the pockets of their owners are fattened with public funds.

Stockholm uses stability pact

The government says it is forced to implement "spending controls" because of its commitment to the Growth and Stability Pact agreed to by governments in the European Union. The pact sets a limit on the budget deficit of each member states.

In the name of meeting these terms, Stockholm carries out one of the most aggressive economic programs among the European imperialist powers. Having met the standard of a budget deficit of no more than 3 percent of gross domestic product, the Swedish rulers have announced a goal of reaching a surplus of 2 percent. Stage one is a 0.5 percent surplus in the budget for this year.

While all the EU powers use the pact as grounds for an assault on the social wage, a number have been unable to meet its guidelines. In fact, the governments of France, Germany, and Italy—the three largest powers in the "Eurozone"—have announced their inability to make the goals for several years running. Berlin and Paris were the chief promoters of the pact, foisting it on their smaller rivals on the continent.

Among their other problems, the French capitalists, in particular, have had to deal with at times widespread resistance to their efforts to cut the social wage in order to meet the pact's conditions.

To date, the Swedish government has not faced the same kinds of obstacles. In 1998, without any debate and few protests, it implemented a new pension system, often referred to as the "crown jewel" of the so-called Swedish model—that is, a raft of government-provided social services that were won through the historic struggles of working people. The confusion among working people about the real meaning of this particular reform has begun to dissipate, however, as the impact of the lower benefits on recent retirees has begun to register.

Popular discontent with Stockholm's course among working people here found one outlet in the September 2003 referendum aimed at adopting the euro. Prime Minister Göran Persson of the Social Democratic Party, who had invested much of his prestige in the campaign for a "yes" vote, was dealt an unexpected defeat.

Nonetheless, the government has not backed off its course of deeper assaults on working people's hard-won rights. Recently it established a committee to plan further "reforms" in family allowances and benefits to disabled people and the unemployed. Persson has said that he wants these "reforms" to follow the model of the "reformed" pension system. Under the plan benefits will be divided in three: one part will be financed by the state, one will be included in union contracts, and one will be covered by private insurance.

Benefits will not be set at a fixed level, but instead there is a fixed sum allocated for these programs. Under the plan put forward, an increase in claims for disability insurance would lead to a reduction in benefit payments. The door will be open for a seamless transition, when the economic crisis deepens, into a system where individuals have to rely increasingly on private insurance.

Gleijeses discusses Cuba's revolutionary role in Africa at University of Minnesota

Militant photos by Elizabeth Olson

Piero Gleijeses (right), author of *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa 1959–1976*, spoke to 150 people at a February 26 program at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He explained Cuba's internationalist aid to national liberation struggles in Angola and other African countries, using documents released by the U.S., Belgian, and other imperialist governments to refute Washington's cover-up of its real role in Africa and to demonstrate the selfless example set by Cuban volunteer soldiers, doctors, and technicians working in the region.

St. Paul transit workers strike for health benefits

Continued from front page

Local 1005.

In addition to offering a paltry 1 percent wage raise, the Metro Council, which runs Twin Cities Metro Transit, is demanding that all retiree health benefits for new-hires be eliminated, and that the workers pay up do $136 per month for health insurance. Under the old contract, Metro Transit pays two-thirds of the health insurance costs for workers who retire at age 55. To receive this benefit, workers are required to have at least 10 years on the job at Metro Transit if they were hired before 1995, 15 years between 1995 and 2000, and 17 years if they were hired after 2000. The company is demanding that the minimum years of employment required to qualify for this retirement benefit be raised to 17 years for all current employees, and that all retirement benefits be eliminated for future employees.

The bosses argue that they do not have enough money to pay for workers' health care because the costs are "soaring out of control." Metro Council Chairman Peter Bell told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* that the transit workers had a "Ferrari" health plan. In a letter to the editor entitled "Why transit workers won't get a better deal," in the February 23 *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Bell wrote, "Union leaders are asking taxpayers to dig deeper to subsidize a level of benefits that few taxpayers enjoy. That is neither fair nor realistic."

Minnesota governor Timothy Pawlenty openly backed the Metro Transit bosses against the strikers. "We don't want a strike," he said before the walkout, "but we cannot continue to give lifetime health care benefits. We'll continue to give them to current employees, but not to new ones."

Strikers have rejected these arguments. Local 1005 president Ron Lloyd said the first day of the walkout that the Metro Council was trying to bust the union. Lloyd told a February 23 Minnesota Public Radio news reporter, "We've given up wage increases, cost of living, and we've changed some work rules so management could get by cheaper in order to keep that health insurance. And now 25 years later…they want to take those insurances away."

Militant/Jacob Perasso

Bus drivers, mechanics, and clerical workers walked off the job March 4 in St. Paul, Minnesota, in response to company demands to gut health coverage for retirees.

Teresa Baird-Lundblad, a garage secretary-maintenance clerk at the Heywood garage in Minneapolis said, "I think it's a travesty. It's unfair to the new-hires, the newest drivers. It is unfair to retirees. It is unfair to people who stay there because the benefits are good. And in the long term, the benefits are what people stay for."

"This is not a strike over pay-raise-type issues," Michael Rafim, a bus driver picketing at the Sixth Avenue bus barn, told the *Militant*. "It's about our health care. If we let them go after the new guys, they'll just find a way of getting rid of the rest of us and then we'll all be in trouble. What they are offering us is like telling somebody to jump up in the air so you can go cut their legs off."

Clarence, another driver walking the picket line, said, "They have the money, but they're not giving us anything. Their wage increase is actually just a decrease.

"This job takes a toll on your body," he continued. "There are a lot of guys who have many serious health problems because of the work. We need that health care. I know Metro Transit has its problems but we gotta live, too".

Outside the North Cleveland Garage in St. Paul, John, a mechanic for 31 years, said, "the Metro Council is forcing us out on strike. They don't want to pay the health care. What they want is more concessions from our union. They're trying to use us as an example to go after other workers."

On the same picket line, Byron, a welder for 30 years, said, "that's why we're standing out here. This isn't just about us. Some of us will be retiring soon but we need to protect the young people as well as ourselves. When you work on those buses you breathe in a lot of fumes from the diesel fuel. And when I started we used to work with asbestos, too."

The strikers are receiving support on the picket lines from passers-by, with many drivers honking their horns in solidarity. One driver rolled down her window as she went by and shouted, "I know they have the money. I support you!"

Youth build 2005 Caracas world festival

Continued from front page

Electoral Council (CNE) announced it had discovered that of the 3.4 million signatures submitted by the pro-imperialist opposition coalition, Coordinadora Democrática, on a petition demanding a presidential recall referendum, only 1.8 million were valid. This was far short of the 2.4 million signatures required by law to hold such a vote. Daily antigovernment marches that took place the first week of March to protest the CNE decision were often violent. Protesters blockaded major thoroughfares in and out of largely upper middle-class neighborhoods in Caracas and other major cities, burned tires, and clashed with the National Guard. Nine people were killed during those protests and dozens were injured.

William Lara, a central leader of the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) who was the head of the National Assembly at the time of the failed April 2002 coup, told delegates in a speech at the JVR congress that the government now has ballistics and other evidence pointing to "provocateurs organized by the opposition as the culprits for at least six of the deaths" during the recent antigovernment protests.

Demonstrations by the pro-imperialist opposition continued the second week of March, but were smaller and less frequent. Several hundred, for example, rallied March 10 in the Sucre municipality in Caracas.

The showdown between large sections of the working class, peasantry, and some middle-class layers, on one hand, and the majority of the capitalist class, on the other, is the third major class confrontation in the country the last two years. Two previous U.S.-backed efforts to topple the Chávez government—a short-lived military coup in April 2002 and a bosses' lockout last year—were defeated as millions of working people mobilized in the streets, dividing the military.

After these two setbacks, Coordinadora Democrática launched the recall referendum petition drive, submitting 3.4 million signatures December 19.

The national government charged that the signature gathering was marked by major fraud. Evidence presented by government officials included statements by workers who said their employers coerced them into signing the opposition petitions under the threat of losing their jobs and forged signatures of people who have died.

The CNE announced that 1 million of the signatures submitted in the recall referendum petition could be reconfirmed by each individual signer showing up at one of 2,700 polling stations across the country and personally verifying their signature—leaving the door open for a recall referendum if enough signatures are verified. CNE officials pointed to massive irregularities in the petitions, including thousands of signatures obviously printed with identical handwriting. The CNE had announced that the dates for such a reconfirmation process would be March 18–22. JVR leaders here said that decision has now been changed and the revalidation process will take place at the end of March.

The JVR congress launched a campaign to mobilize its members and other opponents of the U.S.-backed recall referendum drive to serve as monitors in the polling stations and to visit hundreds of thousands of people at home where there is evidence of possible coercion to sign the opposition petition and try to convince them to show up and remove their signatures.

Literacy campaigns

Two main political banners adorned the gymnasium where the JVR congress was held. "Venezuelan youth are present in Mission Robinson, Rivas, and Sucre," read one. Mission Robinson is a nationwide literacy campaign launched by the government last July with substantial aid and volunteer trainers from Cuba. Its goal is to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to more than 1.5 million people who were illiterate—about 12 percent of adults in this country of 24 million people. Literacy classes are taught by about 100,000 volunteers, most of them university students.

Another 2 million Venezuelans have never finished basic education. Mission Sucre, which began last fall, offers free adult education courses to people seeking to improve their skills. Mission Rivas aims to draw young people who have dropped out of high school back to complete their studies and move on to courses at the Bolivarian University, recently established by the government.

About 1 million Venezuelans have graduated from basic literacy classes since last summer, JVR leaders reported at the congress. "Mission Robinson is the best tool we've had to reach out to millions of people with the message that they can take their destiny into their own hands," said María de Caceres, a delegate from Maracaibo, in the state of Zulia.

Another major banner portrayed Uncle Sam shooting missiles around the world and read, "Bush: terrorist," with a swastika painted on it. This view of the Bush administration is widely promoted by the entire left in Venezuela.

Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Delegates at opening session of First Patriotic Council of the Youth of the Fifth Republic Movement (JVR), held March 13 in Barquisimeto, Venezuela.

International guests

International guests at the congress included Miriam Morales, general secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and a leader of the Union of Young Communists (UJC) of Cuba, and representatives of the Movement of Communist Youth of France, Young Socialists in the United States, National Democratic Youth Organization (EDON) of Cyprus, and Young Socialists of Canada. Otto Rivero, first secretary of the UJC, Kenia Serrano, the UJC's head of international relations, and Javier Labrada, a member of the UJC's Political Bureau, also attended part of the last day of the congress.

Venezuelan organizations with fraternal ties to the JVR that had observers at the meeting included the Communist Youth of Venezuela, Coordinadora Simón Bolívar, Participative Democracy, and the Venezuela-Cuba Friendship Association.

All the international guests gave greetings at the opening session of the conference.

"Resistance by the Venezuelan people to U.S. imperialism's offensive in Latin America is vital to the Cuban Revolution," said Morales. She said the number of Cuban internationalist volunteers in Venezuela, currently 15,000, will increase. Some 10,000 of them are Cuban doctors operating free neighborhood clinics in working-class neighborhoods and rural areas where working people have had little or no access to health care, Morales said. Others include volunteers training Venezuelan students who are teaching literacy classes, athletic instructors, and agricultural specialists.

The UJC and the World Federation of Democratic Youth have launched a major effort to organize as many as 20,000 young people to come to Venezuela next year for the world youth festival, Morales said. This will be a gathering of young people from around the world who are part of national liberation movements, labor struggles, fights by peasants for land, and other social struggles who will come together to exchange experiences and get a better understanding on how they can fight to win.

Morales urged JVR delegates to back campaigns by WFDY to expand support for the national liberation struggles in Palestine and Western Sahara.

Militant/Argiris Malapanis

María de Cáceres (at mike), delegate from Maracaibo, Zulia state, speaks at workshop on "international influences on the Bolivarian revolution." To her right are Wikénferd Oliver, head of international relations of the JVR, and Miriam Morales (seated), a leader of the Union of Communist Youth of Cuba and general secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

Otto Rivero told delegates on the last day of the congress that "Cuba's doors are open to Venezuelan youth." About 8,000 Venezuelan students are now in Cuba taking courses on social work, he said, and another 13,000 have already gone through such classes in Cuba. A good number of the delegates had recently done three-month stints in Cuba and finished such courses. Another 10,000 Venezuelan students will go to Cuba once those who are already there return, Rivero said.

Rivero and Kenia Serrano met with 100 students at the Polytechnic Institute here in Barquisimeto on the evening of March 13 as part of a nationwide tour to build local Venezuela-Cuba Friendship Associations, especially on campuses, and to promote the world youth festival.

"Imperialist domination has created explosive conditions throughout Latin America," Serrano said at the Polytechnic meeting, "and more and more of the people of Latin America are resisting. Young people must join workers and peasants to take the offensive against imperialism and in the struggle for a just society, a socialist society."

She pointed to the experience of the UJC in organizing work brigades and other such projects in the year leading up to the 14th world youth festival in Cuba and an earlier such international gathering in Havana in the 1970s, as examples of what can be done in the next year leading up to the August 2005 youth festival in Caracas. Serrano said UJC delegations have recently visited Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay to build the upcoming festival.

"The Young Socialists in the United States have been and will continue to join Venezuelan working people and youth on the front lines in fighting the drive by U.S. imperialism and sections of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie to overthrow the elected government here," said Olivia Nelson of the YS in the United States at the opening session. Washington's foreign policy, she said, is not irrational, stupid, or the product of an ultrarightist administration. It's the product of the profit-driven demands of the capitalist system itself, the economic and social conditions of which today are increasingly similar to those that marked the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"We can clearly see what Washington is doing in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, Korea, and Colombia—on the doorsteps of Venezuela—using its 'fight against terrorism' for wars of imperial conquest and to attack any people who dare to defend their sovereignty," Nelson continued. "It's more difficult, but important for those outside the United States to see the consequences of the exact same policies by the U.S. rulers inside the belly of the beast, which began much before September 11, 2001, and before George W. Bush was elected president." These policies are driven by the U.S. rulers' need to shore up their declining rate of profit.

Nelson pointed to the ongoing strike by coal miners in Utah and to the union-organizing fight by garment workers at the Point Blank company in Florida as examples of working-class resistance to the bosses' offensive. "The Young Socialists are integrating in our work, as part of this proletarian resistance, defense of Venezuela and Cuba against the offensive by U.S. imperialism, which includes building the world youth festival," she concluded.

Chrisanthos Zamanou from EDON of Cyprus said he was very proud that his organization had hosted a WFDY meeting in January, where the decision was made to organize the next world youth festival in Venezuela. He pledged that EDON would bring a large delegation of Cypriot youth to the event, "even though we are halfway around the other side of the globe."

Natalie Doucet from the Young Socialists in Canada spoke about the role of Canadian imperialism in aiding the U.S.-backed drive to oust the Chávez government.

Among the other speakers at the opening session were MVR leaders, including Luis Reyes Reyes, the governor of Lara state. Barquisimeto is the capital of Lara.

Class contradictions

Much of the work of the delegates took place at 20 roundtables, most of which were not open to observers. They included workshops on topics such as "the agricultural strategy of revolutionary youth" and "state institutions and policies to ensure the well-being of the Venezuelan people and youth."

All of the delegates were local or regional coordinators of JVR clubs. Most were students. A good number were teachers or worked for government entities, like the National Institute for Land the Ministry of Education, or in mayors' offices. A few

Continued on Page 10

— CALENDAR —

NEW ZEALAND
Christchurch

Washington vs. Havana: A Cuban Response to U.S. Threats. Speaker: Juan Pozo, Asia-Pacific representative of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples. Sun., March 28, 7:30 p.m., *Trade Union Center, 199 Armagh St. (Cnr. Madras St.) Christchurch Cuba Friendship Society. Tel: (3) 377-3834.*

Cuban Five appeal U.S. gov't frame-up

Continued from front page

the case of Hernández—to commit murder. The five had been gathering information on ultrarightist Cuban-American groups that have organized violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. territory with the com plicity of the U.S. government. The groups were funded and in some cases created by Washington.

While the defense attorneys were originally allocated 15 minutes to present their case, the judges gave them a few extra minutes to present their arguments.

Lawyers for the five told the court that the government had denied defense lawyers access to documents seized from the defendants. They also argued that the long jail terms violated sentencing guidelines, and that the location of the trial in Miami acted against their receiving a fair hearing. Assistant Federal Public Defender Richard Klugh spoke first. Dealing with the case of Gerardo Hernández, he stated that the "conspiracy to commit murder" charge "does not stand up."

The prosecution had accused Hernández of feeding information to the Cuban government on Feb. 24, 1996, flights by the right-wing Cuban-American group Brothers to the Rescue. On that day two of the planes were shot down in Cuban airspace by Cuban fighter jets.

Prosecutors claimed that the planes had not left international airspace. Hernández, they said, had warned other Cuban revolutionaries operating within the ultrarightist group to stay on the ground that day.

Klugh pointed out that a confrontation had been widely anticipated that day, including by U.S. government agencies and Brothers to the Rescue leaders, since the Cuban government had announced that it would no longer allow the planes to violate its airspace. Brothers to the Rescue had conducted 25 illegal incursions over the previous 20 months, he noted, sparking 25 protests by Havana. At least one of the "Brothers" pilots was wanted for the bombing of civilian installations in Cuba, he added.

In answer to the charge of conspiracy to commit espionage, Klugh said that U.S. officials had admitted that "no top secret information was obtained or sent," and that the information gathered by the five Cubans was all publicly available.

This, said Klugh, was also true for Antonio Guerrero, who had worked at the U.S. Air Force Base in Homestead, Florida. Guerrero, who did not have a security clearance, had never violated the base's security regulations and had "counted airplanes to see if there is a buildup" indicating a threat to Cuba.

With these points in mind, Klugh concluded, the life sentences were not justified and should be reversed.

Leonard Weinglass, the only private attorney acting for the defense, argued that it was not possible to get a fair trial in Miami for such a case, given the number of opponents of the revolution among Cubans resident in the city. He noted that half a dozen people had been excused from the jury after they expressed fear of the possible reaction of neighbors or co-workers.

During the original trial, recalled Weinglass, rightists dressed in military fatigues and wearing pictures of bazookas had entered the courtroom. "If the jury didn't know before they knew now what the reaction would be," if they came down with a verdict not to the liking of right-wing groups, he said. "The trial should have been moved 25 miles away to Fort Lauderdale."

Case for the prosecution

Prosecutor Caroline Miller claimed that Gerardo Hernández—a "career member of the Cuban Intelligence Service"—had made sure that the Cuban agents in Brothers to the Rescue didn't fly on Feb. 24, 1996.

"You must infer" that he knew the planes would be shot down, she charged.

Judge Phyllis Kravitch interrupted Miller on this point. Even if Hernández knew of the coming confrontation, she asked, how would he have known whether it would take place in international airspace—making it murder in the judges' eyes—or an act of defense of the country's sovereignty against the violation of its airspace.

Lead Judge Stanley Birch indicated that the court might consider a reduction in the sentences, even if it doesn't order a new trial. Defense lawyers say that it could be months before the court issues a decision.

At a packed press conference after the hearing, Weinglass noted that the U.S. government had not charged the Cubans with murder or espionage, since they "knew it could not prove either charge. That's why it charged them with conspiracy," he said.

Nor could the prosecutors "prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the shooting down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes took place in international airspace," he said. In fact, they had conceded at the trial that the plane of Brothers to the Rescue leader José Basulto had entered Cuban airspace, although it had not been shot down.

"You're really talking about a question of seconds," said Weinglass, given the speed of the Cuban Air force planes. Washington "claims the Brothers to the Rescue planes were eight to twelve seconds outside of Cuban airspace," he said, while "the Cubans say they were 20 seconds inside."

When a reporter for Channel 10 television news asked, "does anyone here believe for a second that the shooting down of the planes wasn't murder?" he was answered by Andrés Gomez, who leads the Antonio Maceo Brigade, a group of Cubans in the United States who support the Cuban Revolution.

The Brothers to the Rescue planes were "the exact same kind of planes that in the past had been used to drop bombs on Cuba," he noted. "Cuba repeatedly warned the U.S. government that these flights must stop."

"Cuba presented its radar records to an international commission investigating the incident, proving the planes were in Cuba's airspace," Gomez added. By contrast, he said, "the U.S. government refused to turn over its radar records."

About 25 supporters of the five attended the appeal, including the brother and daughter of René González and Gloria La Riva of the National Committee to Free the Five. A number of lawyers' associations from Latin America and Europe were also represented along with the Miami-based Alianza Martiana. Relatives of the downed Brothers to the Rescue pilots were also there.

Algerian who led antideportation fight in Canada is locked up in U.S. immigration jail

Reuters/Christinne Muschi

MONTREAL, Quebec—Mohammed Cherfi was deported to the United States on March 5. The Algerian citizen, a member of the Action Committee of Those Without Papers, was handcuffed and forcefully removed from the St. Pierre United Church in Quebec City, where he had taken refuge from immigration cops three weeks earlier. Cherfi is being held at a "pre-deportation center" in Buffalo, New York, awaiting a March 17 hearing. He is threatened with removal to Algeria, where his supporters say he could face torture and "disappearance" at the hands of the government.

Cherfi, 35, has been the main spokesperson for a longstanding fight by hundreds of refugees against the Canadian government's effort to deport them back to Algeria. In October 2002 Ottawa was forced to allow more than 90 percent of these refugees to remain in Canada. Dozens of others—among them Cherfi—were excluded for so-called technical or legal reasons, or are still waiting for an answer. On March 9, actions demanding Cherfi be repatriated to Canada were organized in several cities. In the photo above, Cherfi's wife, Louise Bovin, addresses a rally of 150 people that day in front of the offices of Immigration Canada in Montreal. The sign next to her reads "Canada, land of asylum?"

To find out more about Mohammed Cherfi's fight, call (418) 262-0144 or write to solimo2004@yahoo.fr

—SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELS AND SYLVIE CHARBIN

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Socialist coal miners, meat packers map out 'Militant' sales drive plans

BY PAUL PEDERSON

As supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* prepare to launch an international drive to double the number of new readers of the English-language weekly and increase by 25 percent the number to the Spanish-language monthly, socialists who work in coal mines and meat slaughterhouses are mapping out plans to win new subscribers among workers in those industries.

The sales drive begins March 20 and extends until May 17. Responding to increased interest in the socialist press among working people and youth, campaigners aim to sell a total of 2,000 subscriptions to the *Militant* and 500 to *Perspectiva Mundial*. First-time readers of both publications can pick up a subscription for the newly reduced rate of $5 (see ad on page 2).

At their national meeting held over the March 13–14 weekend in Pittsburgh, socialist coal miners, most of whom are members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), signed on as volunteers for teams to sell the socialist press to miners and others in the coalfields of southern West Virginia and New Mexico. The teams will begin their efforts on the first weekend of the eight-week campaign.

Tony Lane, a miner in Pittsburgh, reported, "one team from Colorado and Utah will be heading to Farmington, New Mexico, and the surrounding towns." Coal miners in the BHP complex there recently carried out a two-week strike, winning a wage increase and an increase in the allowance for Navajo traditional medicine, he added.

Another team is headed to the coalfields of southern West Virginia. Lane said that team "will find out more about the recent fight by miners at Rockspring Development's Camp Creek/Ben Haley mine, where they forced the bosses to recognize the UMWA.

"There are some 230 workers at the mine," said Lane. "The victory was delayed by a several-month court battle, in which more than 30 miners testified to prevent the votes of foremen and supervisors being used to deny their election win."

Meeting the same weekend, socialist meat packers began putting together a team to travel to Storm Lake, Iowa, where workers at a Tyson-owned plant that employs 1,200 are in the middle of a drive to organize into the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

The socialist miners took a national sales goal of 50 *Militant* and 12 *PM* subscriptions—more than double their goal during the last sales campaign. The national gathering of meat packers decided to aim for a total of 213 subscriptions to packinghouse workers—100 to the *Militant* and 113 to *PM*.

Partisans of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* have also launched a campaign to raise $85,000 to cover the publication's publishing and mailing expenses. That complementary effort runs concurrently with the sales campaign, ending on May 17.

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Why abortion rights are central to the struggle for the full emancipation of women, and why the labor movement has a vital stake in this fight. *In English and Spanish.*

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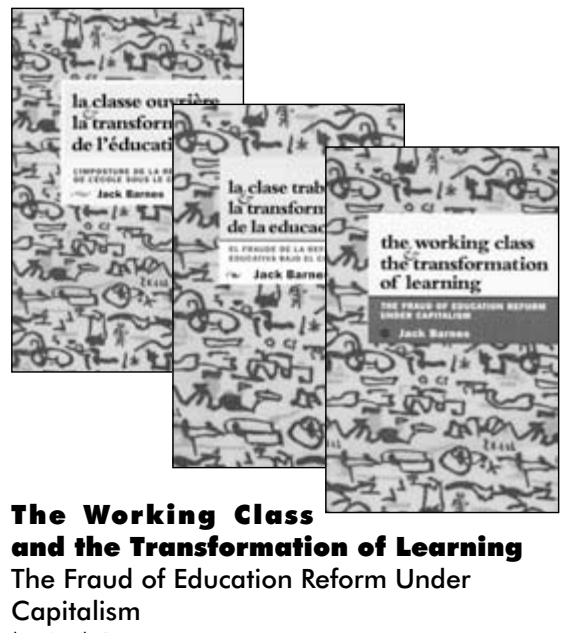

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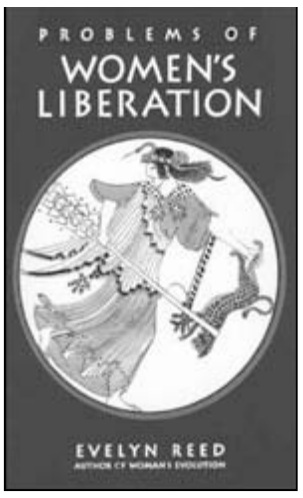

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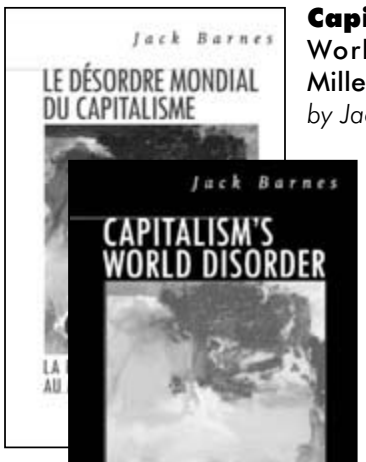

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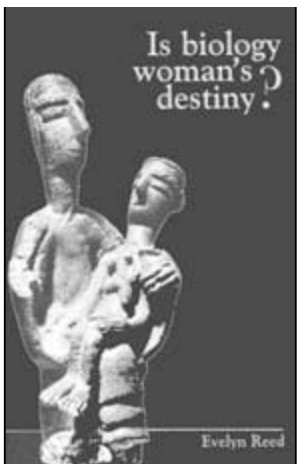

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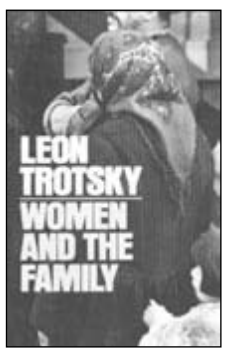

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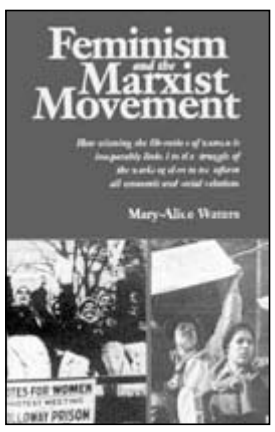

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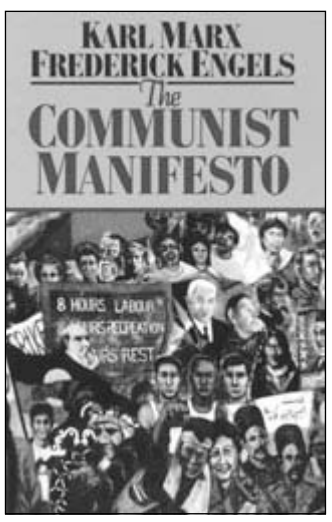

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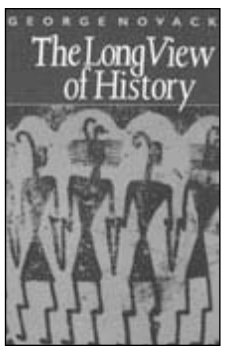

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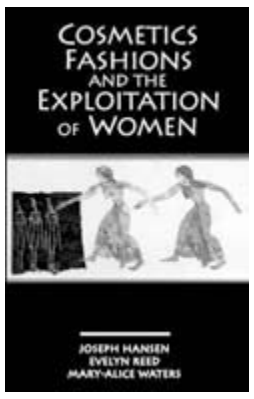
Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women
by Evelyn Reed, Joseph Hansen, Mary-Alice Waters



How big business plays on women's second-class status and social insecurities to market cosmetics and rake in profits. The introduction by Waters explains how the entry of millions of women into the workforce during and after World War II irreversibly changed U.S. society and laid the basis for a renewed rise of struggles for women's emancipation.

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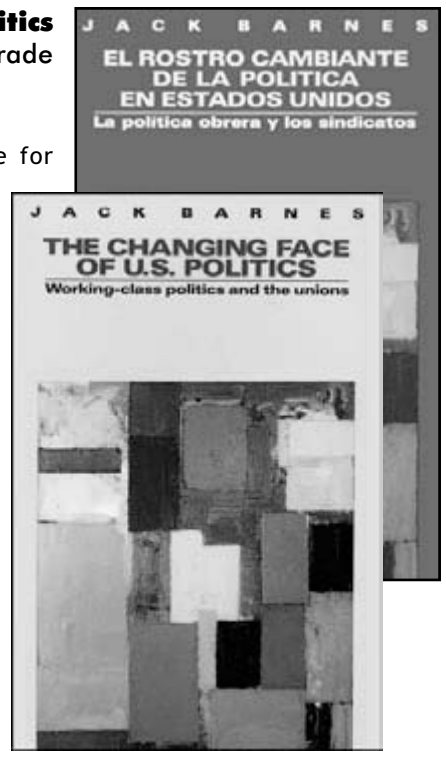

An invaluable guide to the struggle for women's liberation and its increased weight in working-class politics, this is a handbook for workers, farmers, and youth repelled by the class inequalities, economic instability, racism, women's oppression, cop violence, and wars endemic to capitalism, and who are seeking the road toward effective action to overturn that exploitative system and join in reconstructing the world on new, socialist foundations. *In English, Spanish, and French.*

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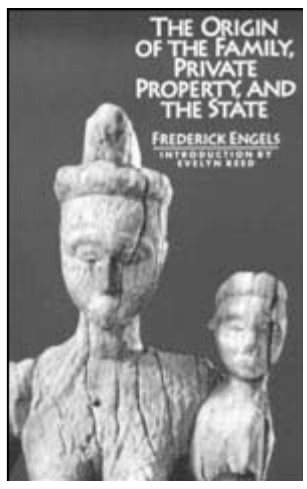

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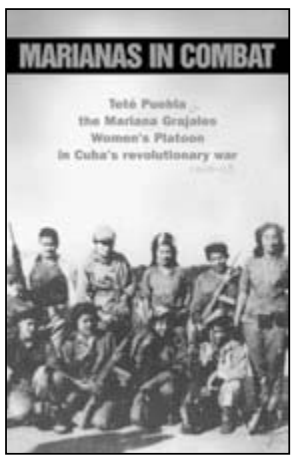
Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War, 1956–58
by Teté Puebla



Brigadier General Teté Puebla, the highest-ranking woman in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, joined the struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1956, when she was fifteen years old. This is her story, from clandestine action in the cities to serving as an officer in the victorious Rebel Army's first all-women's platoon. *In English and Spanish*

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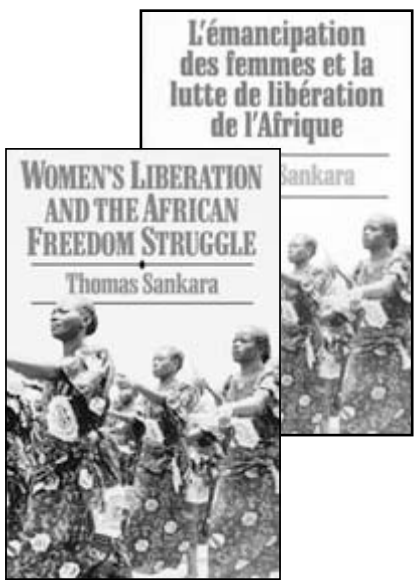

Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle
by Thomas Sankara

"There is not true social revolution without the liberation of women," explains the leader of the 1983-87 revolution in Burkina Faso. *In English, Spanish, and French.*

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To Speak the Truth
Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End
by Ernesto Che Guevara, Fidel Castro

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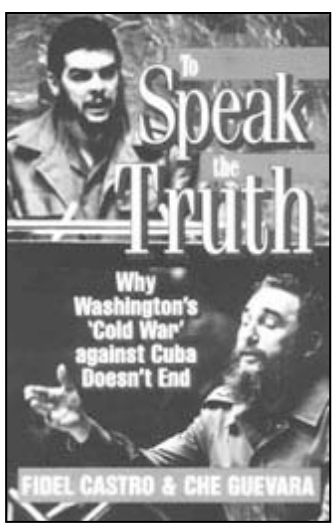

Malcolm X Talks to Young People
by Malcolm X

Four talks and an interview given to young people in Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States in the last months of Malcolm's life. This new edition contains the entire December 1964 presentation by Malcolm X at the Oxford Union in the United Kingdom, in print for the first time anywhere. The collection concludes with two memorial tributes by a young socialist leader to this great revolutionary. *In English and Spanish.*

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...g those listed on page 8.

George Novack: in defense of materialism

Below is an excerpt from *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy,* one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. It is a collection of articles written between 1960 and 1977 by Socialist Workers Party leader George Novack. He defends scientific socialism, the generalization of the historic line of march of the working class, as explained by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. He answers those who, parading as the true interpreters of Marx, have provided a "philosophical" veneer for the anti-working-class course of Stalinist and social democratic misleaderships worldwide.

The article excerpted below pays tribute to the philosophical contributions in defense of materialism made by Italian Marxist Sebastiano Timpanaro (1923–2000). The excerpt refers to Noam Chomsky, a U.S. linguist and anarchist known for his theory that the underlying logical structure of language stems from innate biological patterns of perception.

Russian workers and soldiers join rally in 1917 to defend revolution. Bolshevik leaders developed and applied Marxism in practice as they led working people to take power and overthrow capitalist exploitation.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY GEORGE NOVACK

The essays in his book are a sustained polemic against the more prominent antimaterialists who profess allegiance to Marxism but sacrifice some of its principles in their writings. These include such figures as Louis Althusser; the early Georg Lukács; Karl Korsch; Herbert Marcuse, Alfred Schmidt, and other luminaries of the Frankfurt school, and Jean-Paul Sartre. In connection with them [Timpanaro] takes up the positions of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Noam Chomsky.

Timpanaro sets his criticism of the current adulterators of Marxist theory in the broad historical context of intellectual development over the past century. Marxism, as the scientific outlook of the revolutionary working class, has had to make its way through a cultural and political terrain occupied by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces and ideas that have exerted unremitting pressures upon its adherents. Consequently, from one generation to the next, the propagators and defenders of dialectical materialism have been obliged to counter attempts to introduce incongruous ideas, derived from alien class sources, into its structure.

The deviators have been most strongly influenced by two opposing trends of bourgeois thought. One has been neoidealism; the other neopositivism. Despite their very different standpoints and methods, they have in common a hostility to modern materialism as elucidated by the creators of Marxism and their most qualified disciples. Most of the Western Marxists have gone astray by succumbing to certain attractive tenets of one or the other of these types of thought.

Just as Lenin took up the cudgels against empiriocriticism in 1908, so his true followers must nowadays ward off the encroachments of a comparable eclecticism. They have to conduct a two-front campaign: against a relapse into semi-Hegelianism by exponents of the praxis school on one side, and against the formalistic structuralists on the other. Timpanaro subjects both of these fashionable currents of thought to searching examination.

Their three-sided controversy revolves around the question: How is the relation between objective reality and social life to be conceived? The mechanical materialists who espouse behaviorism or biologism try to slur over or obliterate the qualitative distinction between animal and human behavior. The praxologists, on the other hand, assert or imply that the "second nature," the artificial environment created by humanity in the historical development of social life, has entirely absorbed primordial nature into itself. They thereby head toward some form of a voluntaristic spiritualism….

The praxis theoreticians, from the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness* to Antonio Gramsci and Sartre, commit the unpardonable transgression of shuffling away the existence of nature independent of humanity by insisting that the object is inseparable from the subject. However, humanity's action and effect upon nature does not eliminate the priority of nature's action and effect upon humanity. For all materialists, pre-Marxist and Marxist alike, the objective world antedates humanity and underlies its history. Any indecisiveness on this cardinal proposition inexorably pulls the wobblers toward antimaterialist conclusions of one sort or another.

Such a breakaway from the first premise of materialism is the impetus behind the attacks upon the philosophical traditions upheld by Frederick Engels, George Plekhanov, and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The negative evaluations made of Engels by various thinkers from Lukács to Colletti have a logical outcome. It is no matter of chance, Timpanaro says that "those who have embarked on a 'Marxism without Engels' have arrived, coherently enough, at a 'Marxism without Marx.'" The theoretical views of the cocreators of dialectical materialism are so firmly welded together that the positions of the one cannot be disavowed without discarding those of the other….

Timpanaro praises the noted linguist Noam Chomsky for his courageous anti-imperialist stands and crusades for civil liberties at home and abroad. And he acknowledges the worth of his researches in transformational grammar. At the same time he censures the MIT professor for reverting to the device of "innate ideas" (inherent structures of the mind) as the source of language. This kind of explanation was long ago discredited by empiricism and is by now too antiquated even for bourgeois thought, he says. Its Cartesian philosophy is antiempirical, antimaterialistic, and nonevolutionary. Its dualism introduces a hiatus between the human and other animals that no intermediate steps can bridge. Chomsky's effort to overcome this gap by turning innate ideas into hereditary predispositions "wavers between an antediluvian spiritualism and a genuinely 'vulgar' materialism."

In any case, Chomsky does not claim to be a Marxist; he is a libertarian. Timpanaro draws a clear line between the scientific gains made by the leading structural linguists in their specialty, from de Saussure to Chomsky, and their French extralinguistic imitators, who have extrapolated their conceptions in an illegitimate manner.

It also refers to Antonio Gramsci, a founder of the Italian Communist Party who wrote extensively while in the jails of Mussolini's fascist regime until his death in 1937. He developed an interpretation of Marxism emphasizing "praxis"—which implies an ability of revolutionary will to substitute for a lack of propitious objective opportunities—as well as changing mass consciousness through training "proletarian intellectuals" and the creation of "proletarian culture" to contend with bourgeois culture. The reference to structuralism concerns the view that in social analysis the question of historical evolution is greatly subordinate to the examination of existing interrelationships between various institutions and social structures. Copyright © 1978 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

March BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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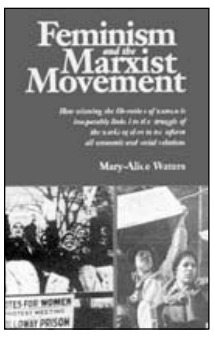

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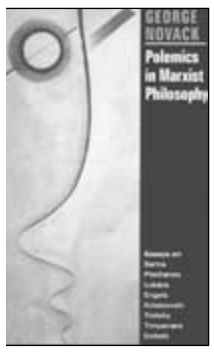

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— GREAT SOCIETY

Well, of course—The *Christian Science Monitor* took the annual U.S. human rights report and dipped it in a bit of acid.

Harry Ring

It observed: "The U.S. State Department issued its annual review of human rights around the world—grading each nation on its performances. Only one country escaped scrutiny: The U.S. itself."

For instance—The *Monitor* observes that, "one of the areas the report monitors is the functioning of prison systems. So we had the bizarre spectacle of a nation that incarcerates 2.2 million people—one-quarter of the world's prisoners—casting a baleful eye over Iceland, which has a grand total of 110 people incarcerated."

P.S.—We have it on authority that the report was penned by military brass monitoring prison cages in Guantánamo.

The holy dollar—Maurice Greenberg is chairman of American International Group, said to be the world's largest insurer. In this capacity, Greenberg froths at the mouth over class-action damage suits that sometimes win big damages. (Insurers also pay some of the award.) The day after Secretary of Education Rod Paige threw a poisoned dart at a teachers union, the National Education Association, labeling it as "terrorist," Greenberg joined in. With an apparent phobic hatred for lawyers who oppose curbs on class action, Greenberg bellowed that they too are "terrorists."

"May we help you?"—The Department of Homeland Security is busy implementing the "antiterrorist" Patriot Act. Last June it ordered that all phone inquiries to Immigration be funneled into an 800 number at the Homeland commission's central office. The new phone system is handled by private contractors.

Immigrant defense lawyers charge that a large amount of "mistaken" information has led to loss of citizenship, arrests, and deportations.

Office politics—Richard Grasso, ex-chair of the New York Stock Exchange, rejected the demand of the Big Board that he return at least $120 million of his pay package. Also, he may take court action to get a remaining $20 million he contends they owe him.

Shafted?—Mark Swartz, former financial chief at Tyco International, testified that the $12.5 million he's accused of stealing was part of his bonus. He added that originally, the company board "loaned" him the money, but decided it might look bad. Apparently a $12.5 million bonus is less noticeable.

New Zealand gov't targets gains of Maori fight

BY JANET ROTH

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—In the latest broadside in a political offensive against social gains and rights won by the Maori people, Labour Party prime minister Helen Clark has announced that her government will review funding to educational scholarships and other programs won as by-products of past struggles by Maori and other working people.

Clark made her proposal—which is consistent with the government's stance toward outstanding land claims and other Maori grievances—in the wake of a well-publicized statement by Donald Brash, the leader of the opposition National Party.

Speaking January 27, Brash condemned government funding for Maori in areas such as health, education, and employment, and claimed that these gave Maori privileges ahead of others and promoted "racial separatism."

He singled out for attack settlements by successive National and Labour party governments to compensate Maori for stolen lands and other resources. He described land claims as a "grievance industry" that Maori were using for financial gain and corruption. Outstanding claims should be dealt with rapidly, he said.

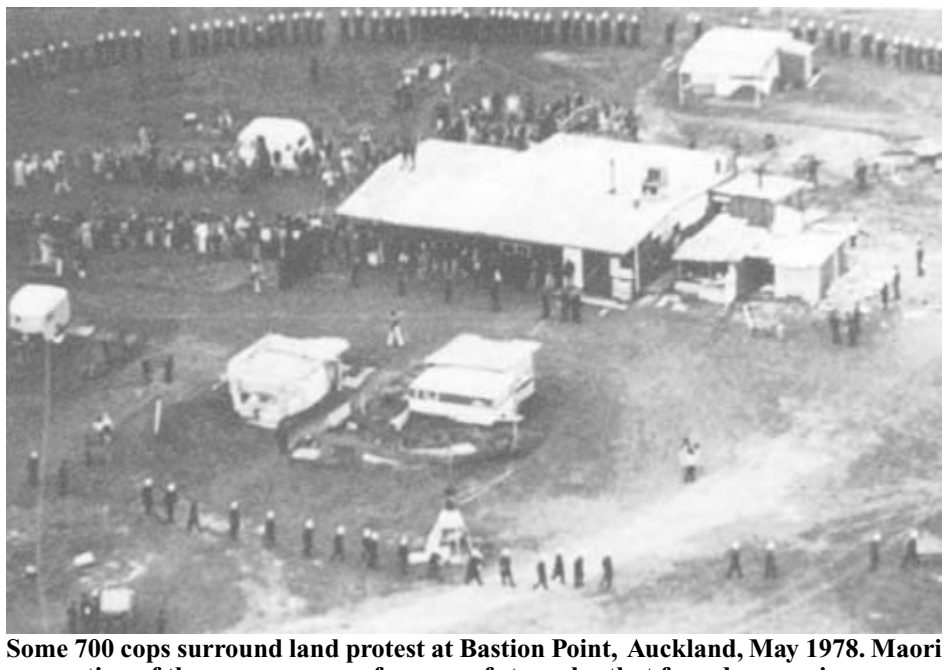
In the month following the National Party leader's speech, Labour slipped behind National in public opinion polls.

Brash's speech, along with the frenzy of endorsement it kicked up among editorial writers, talk show hosts, and other commentators, provided the context and rationale for Clark's statement. Speaking on the February 23 Face to Face television show, she said, "For quite a long time there has been generally a consensus around how a lot of the issues affecting Maoridom are dealt with. That consensus appears to have been shattered" with the Brash statement and the surrounding controversy.

According to the *New Zealand Herald* the following day, the prime minister said that "education and particularly Government-funded scholarships had emerged as an area of public concern."

Clark professed concern about the alleged discriminatory effects of such scholarships. "You have the possibility of someone in the target group [Maori] getting a subsidized education courtesy of the state and next to them is the son or daughter of someone on a low income who doesn't," she said.

Simultaneously, Clark created the new cabinet post of Race Relations Minister, effectively downgrading the responsibilities of Parekura Horomia, the Minister of Maori Affairs. Horomia and other Maori members of parliament (MPs) issued a public protest at this act.



Some 700 cops surround land protest at Bastion Point, Auckland, May 1978. Maori occupation of the area was one of a wave of struggles that forced successive governments to return some stolen lands and take steps to combat discrimination.

Clark was quick to rebuff the MPs, saying: "My message to my colleagues is: 'if you want to get on board for the ride, get on, because this train is moving.'"

Herald columnist John Armstrong wrote February 28 that the Maori MPs had protested because they have "the unenviable task…of explaining to their constituents why Clark has suddenly deemed it necessary to review social programs targeted at Maori [and] failed to rule out a retreat on the foreshore and seabed"—a reference to Labour's announcement that in spite of Maori protests it will expropriate coastal lands and resources that Maori representatives have laid claim to.

"In the final insult," wrote Armstrong, Clark has "appointed her chief hatchetman, Trevor Mallard, as de facto Minister of Maori Affairs and given him the additional task of neutering the Treaty of Waitangi." The insult is compounded by the fact that Mallard is *pakeha*—the common term used here for those of European descent.

Promoted by the ruling class as New Zealand's founding document, the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi has been used as the framework for the settlement of some Maori demands.

Following renewed struggles in the 1970s and 1980s, Labour and National governments established and reinforced the Waitangi Tribunal to hear claims by Maori for lands and other resources stolen from them following colonization by Britain and the formation of the New Zealand nation state in the mid-19th century. More than NZ$675 million (US$1=NZ$0.65) has been paid out to Maori claimants by governments over the past 30 years, with claims by many tribes still pending.

As a result of these same struggles, the Maori language is now taught in a range of educational institutions, and Maori language kindergartens and schools have been established—albeit on shoestring budgets. One survey shows that one in four Maori was able to converse in their language in 2001, compared with less than one in five almost three decades earlier. Maori can apply for grants to assist with both secondary and tertiary schooling. The government grants targeted by Clark are only a portion of these. In addition, some universities have set aside places for Maori in courses where they previously had seldom been admitted.

The majority of education and health in this country used to be free of charge. Over the past decades this has come under attack from successive governments, with increasing privatization and running down of the remaining public services. More and more, people have to pay for publicly provided education and health services.

Government spending targeted to meet Maori needs and to help overcome ongoing discrimination is minimal. For example, the Maori Education Trust administers NZ$6.6 million of annual educational grants—a trifle beside the NZ$7.85 billion budget allocated to the Ministry of Education. Today, just 6 percent of Maori hold a tertiary qualification, compared with 14 percent of pakeha. Continuing protests have been sparked by the impact of the economic crisis, which places additional hurdles before working people who are Maori.

In a *Herald* commentary defending preferential entry quotas for Maori in tertiary education, Khylee Quince, a law lecturer at the University of Auckland, noted that at universities, "despite improved numbers in the 1970s to 1990s, overall enrollment for Maori students has fallen in the past five years."

Quince pointed out that continuing discrimination saw Maori "making up 50 percent of the prison population, being 1.5 times more likely than Pakeha to be sent to prison on conviction for the same crime, 19 percent of Maori women not having access to a telephone in the house, and 40 percent of Maori children growing up in families with an annual income of less than $20,000."

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By Joseph Hansen

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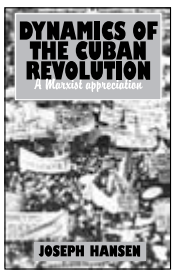

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— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO

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THE MILITANT
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March 30, 1979

AHOSKIE, North Carolina—This small town—in the least unionized state in the country—was alive with labor solidarity March 17.

One hundred Steelworkers, their families, and supporters packed the local Elks hall to rally for striking Newport News shipyard workers.

Called by the Roanoke Valley Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO, the rally was designed to show support for United Steelworkers Local 8888 members who live in northeastern North Carolina and work an hour and a half away at the Newport News shipyard.

Speeches and songs boomed out of the hall over a powerful sound system, attracting passersby and residents of the predominantly Black community.

"We are the target people," said Ray Grant, a twenty-eight-year shipyard veteran, in opening the rally. "Tenneco is trying to break our backs, along with all of southern industry. We need to fight, because anything worth having is worth fighting for."

Joe Coyne, president of the Roanoke Valley CLU and an official of the United Paperworkers, stressed the impact the Newport News strike will have on organizing efforts throughout the South.

"In North Carolina," Coyne said, "only 6.3 percent of the work force is organized. Workers get paid from $1.60 to $2.60 an hour. But if we hang together in Newport News, we can whip the employers anywhere. And after we win, we have to organize the entire South, right down to the Florida Keys."

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

March 29, 1954

Secretary of State Dulles, Wall Street's whip at the Inter-American Conference at Caracas, Venezuela, was described as returning to Washington "with a happy smile of triumph" and in a "victory mood." What had he won and against whom?

Dulles' objective was nailed precisely by Guillermo Toriello, Foreign Minister of Guatemala, the small Central American country of three million people that Dulles made his whipping boy at the conference. The aim of the Wall Street banker and State Department head, said Toriello, is "the policy of the big stick and dollar diplomacy in Latin America" and the "internationalization of McCarthyism."

The conference adopted a resolution that, in effect, gave advance approval to U.S. intervention in any Latin American country whose form of government and economic policies do no meet with Washington's approval.

McCarthyism in the United States is aimed at smashing the labor movement and destroying the rights of Negroes, Jews and other minorities. The "internationalization of McCarthyism," as reflected in the Caracas conference, is aimed at smashing all struggles of the Latin American peoples for economic and social betterment, political freedom and release from the bonds of foreign domination.

It was not by accident that the vilest dictatorship and military regimes in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela, took the lead in pushing the U.S. resolution on "communism."

Build April 25 D.C. march!

Continued from front page

dorsed it, among them the United Food and Commercial Workers union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Members of these organizations and other supporters of a woman's right to choose are building the demonstration in cities and towns around the country. The door is wide open to get involved in the coalitions organizing participation. We urge you to participate in planning meetings in your area and to bring co-workers, fellow unionists, students, and others to them. Take stacks of leaflets to post up and distribute. Wear buttons and T-shirts publicizing the action. Take sign-up sheets to wherever others can be enlisted to build it. These materials are available from sponsoring organizations and from www.MarchforWomen.org. In many areas, builders of the action are seeking scholarships from the sponsors for those needing financial assistance to get to Washington.

A woman's right to choose abortion is a question of vital importance to working people. The key is the right of *women* to *choose* whether or not they will bear children—not the state, church, husband, father, judge, or social worker. Only with the right to control their own bodies can women exercise effective control over their lives and reassert their full human identity as productive, not only reproductive, beings. This is a precondition for full equality, affecting a woman's ability to get a job, and thereby gain the economic independence necessary for participation in union, political, and other aspects of social life. The increasing integration of women into the work force over the past decades has strengthened the working class, allowing millions to break out of the stultifying isolation of the home. And the 1973 Supreme Court decision decriminalizing abortion was an important stride along this road for women's rights and for all working people. These advances have made it harder for employers to limit women to certain jobs, pay them lower wages than men, or convince them that they should stay in the kitchen and the hearth rather than enter the political and union arena.

That is why a woman's right to choose has come under sustained attack by federal and state administrations of both the Democratic and Republican parties ever since the 1973 ruling. Because of deep-going progressive changes in attitudes held by millions toward women's place in society, however, the ruling class has not been able to roll the clock back to the days before *Roe v. Wade*, when hundreds of women died every year in illegal or self-induced abortions. Instead, opponents of women's rights have probed to curtail that right and whittle away access to abortion. The most recent example is the federal law passed in November—still facing a legal challenge—that, under the deliberately misleading name "Partial-Birth Abortion Act," will outlaw a specific medical procedure used to terminate late-term pregnancies. These restrictions are class-biased, limiting abortion access for working women in particular—from the ban on federal funding for abortion, to waiting periods and laws forcing young women to get parental consent before obtaining an abortion.

These attacks on the right to choose are part of a broader offensive by the U.S. rulers against gains won by working people over the decades. They go hand in hand with the elimination of Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1996, current moves to undermine Medicare and Social Security, and other efforts to further shift the burden for the capitalist economic crisis onto the backs of working people.

The attacks on women's rights have met resistance. Planned Parenthood in Pittsburgh and five other cities successfully rejected an outrageous order by the U.S. Justice Department to turn over confidential medical records as part of enforcing the new antichoice law. Last December, 2,500 city workers in Cincinnati who are members of AFSCME beat back a city council attempt to eliminate their medical coverage for abortion procedures, which they had won in their union contract. And over the past decade, repeated mobilizations by women's rights supporters have pushed back violent efforts by rightists to shut down abortion clinics.

The April 25 march on Washington will draw thousands of working people, youth, and other partisans of women's rights who are determined to defend their hard-won gains. Many are seeking answers to questions on how to chart a road forward in this struggle. The Pathfinder titles featured in the centerspread ad in this issue—with prices reduced to $1 or $2 for all pamphlets and $5 or $10 for all books—are invaluable in providing the working-class perspective that is needed to address these questions. Campaigning to get these books into the hands of other workers, students, and farmers is an important part of building the April 25 demonstration and advancing longer-term struggles by working people.

Youth in Venezuela build world festival

Continued from Page 4

were industrial workers or peasants.

In a number of interviews during the congress, JVR leaders indicated a range of views on what the program of the organization should be.

"The MVR was born as an electoral coalition to put Chávez in the presidency," said Estebán René Carola, an elementary school teacher in Caracas. "The JVR, the youth group, is now being structured as a national organization, because in the past we focused only on elections. Now with the involvement in the literacy campaign and other social programs there is more need for a political organization."

"We admire the support from Cuba, but we are not going to copy the Cuban Revolution," he said. "The Bolivarian revolution," he added, "aims to create social equality under the market system. There are good businessmen and bad businessmen. Many entrepreneurs support Chávez. The bad capitalists, the majority, are those who didn't invest much here and siphoned their capital abroad. But there are many who provide employment and jobs. We have to work with them."

This view was prevalent among most JVR leaders interviewed by the *Militant*.

Others said the class contradictions reflected in the policies of the governing party must be resolved in favor of working people, or no lasting gains can be made for the exploited classes.

"My father is the only cattle rancher in Barinas who agreed to turn his ranch into a cooperative, where all the 20 workers now share in the profits," said Mariano Cadenas, a postal worker in Obispos, Barinas state. "There are hundreds of cattle farmers in Barinas," he said, "some of them with large capitalist holdings. Most of them support Chávez. But they hate the Law of the Land and Agricultural Development, especially the provision that says cattle ranches above a certain size are supposed to be turned into cooperatives. And they have refused adamantly to implement it."

While the existing capitalist social relations have remained intact under the Chávez administration, the government enacted a series of laws in the fall of 2001 that, if implemented, would benefit working people and cut into the prerogatives of local and foreign finance capital. The new agrarian reform law Cadenas was referring to, which grants the rights to titles and credits to peasants who have taken over land on estates of big landowners and are tilling them, was among these measures. Their adoption, and determined struggles by working people to implement them, are at the heart of why most in the Venezuelan capitalist class, with Washington's backing, have not let up in their drive to topple the government.

Luis Rodríguez, a student from Barquisimeto who had recently returned from Cuba, expressed a view different from Carola's in an interview. "What I saw in Cuba is a true social revolution," he said. "I am becoming more convinced that unless action is taken to nationalize the factories and land as they did in Cuba, the poverty plaguing most Venezuelans and the growing unemployment can't be confronted and reversed." A small minority of delegates expressed such a view.

Organizers announced at the conclusion that the JVR had adopted by consensus most of the articles in the group's constitution and declaration of principles. On a number of articles, however, where consensus was not yet reached, Wikénfred Oliver, JVR's head of international relations, told the closing session, discussion will continue in JVR's local chapters and regional structures for 30 days after the congress. Proposals will be referred to the national leadership for further elaboration and be submitted to another national conference.

In the final declaration of the congress the JVR condemned the "terrorist attack in Spain," and extended solidarity to the Cuban Revolution. It called for a campaign demanding freedom for five Cuban revolutionaries jailed in the United States on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage on behalf of the Cuban government.

A major focus of the JVR will be its work to defeat the opposition recall referendum drive and to increase the strength of the MVR in the National Assembly in this year's elections, the declaration said.

Olivia Nelson and Natalie Doucet contributed to this article.

From Pathfinder

Puerto Rico: Independence is a necessity
By Rafael Cancel Miranda
In two interviews, Cancel Miranda—one of five Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years until 1979—speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, the campaign to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement today. $3.00

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'All-people's front' versus working-class political road

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

In a letter to the editor published in last week's issue, reader Shane Brinton challenges the *Militant's* stance of opposition to the two-party system of capitalist rule in this country. Advocating a vote for Democratic candidates as a legitimate "tactic" for socialists today, he argues for a "broad coalition (the All-People's Front) against Bush and the ultra-right."

What is the stance of revolutionaries toward the Democratic and Republican parties? This is not a matter of *tactics* but a more fundamental question of *strategy*. It begins not with elections but with the historic line of march of the working class. Wars of plunder, exploitation, racist oppression, the second-class status of women, the destruction of the environment, and other social ills are all inherent to capitalism—they cannot simply be reformed out of existence. Working people must lead a socialist revolution to eliminate capitalism: a struggle by millions to take power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist class, establish a government of workers and farmers, and create a different kind of state—a workers state.

REPLY TO A READER

In this epoch of imperialism that has existed worldwide since the 1890s, as V.I. Lenin explained in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, there is no progressive wing of the capitalist class in the United States or any other country. Today, as capitalism slides toward a worldwide economic catastrophe because of its built-in contradictions, the ruling class as a whole is driven to try to reverse the long-term decline of its system. To do so they have no choice but to launch increasingly brutal assaults on the living standards and rights of working people at home, while unleashing wars of conquest abroad. The U.S. government serves as the executive body for this capitalist class. No matter who occupies the presidency, whether a Democrat or a Republican, their job is to continue to enforce the interests of the real, unelected rulers.

Two-party system

The capitalist ruling families have two parties who work in cahoots with each other to try to hoodwink working people into thinking they have a democratic choice. The outstanding revolutionary leader Malcolm X explained well the dead-end trap of backing either capitalist party. In the 1964 presidential elections, when liberals and most radicals supported "peace" candidate Lyndon B. Johnson against Republican Barry Goldwater, Malcolm noted that "the shrewd capitalists, the shrewd imperialists, knew that the only way people would run towards the fox [Johnson] would be if you showed them the wolf." At that very moment, he noted, Johnson "had troops invading the Congo and South Vietnam!" Once elected, of course, Johnson brutally escalated the imperialist war against Vietnam.

Just as working people need to organize independently of the bosses in the economic arena by forming trade unions—rejecting company "unions"—our class must organize independently of the bosses in the political arena. An "all-people's front" based on supporting the Democratic Party is like a company union on a political level.

This stance is based on the approach revolutionary socialists have always taken in the United States—since Karl Marx and Frederick Engels collaborated with the young communist movement in the late 1800s, arguing for the building of an independent working-class political party. "Where the working class is not yet far enough advanced in its organization to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, i.e., the political power, of the ruling classes, it must at any rate be trained for this by continual agitation against this power and by a hostile attitude toward the policies of the ruling classes. Otherwise it remains a plaything in their hands," wrote Marx in a Nov. 23, 1871, letter to Friedrich Bolte, a communist working-class leader in New York. Lenin continued along these lines, explaining in a Nov. 9, 1912, article on the U.S. elections that year, "This so-called bipartisan system prevailing in America and Britain has been one of the most powerful means of preventing the rise of an independent working-class, i.e., genuinely socialist, party." The U.S. Communist Party in its early years rejected supporting any capitalist party. And since its founding in 1938, the Socialist Workers Party, following this political continuity, has maintained the perspective of independent working-class political action. I urge Brinton and other readers to study these rich lessons in the two-volume *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S.* by Farrell Dobbs; *Labor's Giant Step: The First Twenty Years of the CIO, 1936-55* by Art Preis; and *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* by Jack Barnes.

Brinton says, "I certainly agree that the Democratic Party is both reactionary and a party of capitalism." He says that workers "are becoming increasingly dissatisfied," but that the majority are "sticking with the Democratic Party."

Continued on next page

NAACP protests racist mandatory sentences in Georgia

BY JAMES HARRIS AND NED MEASEL

ATLANTA—More than 1,000 people rallied at the Georgia State Capitol here March 1 to demand the state Supreme Court release Marcus Dixon, 19, from prison, where he is serving a 10-year term without the possibility of parole. "We call out to the Supreme Court of Georgia to do the right thing and set Marcus free," said Kweisi Mfume, the president of the NAACP, which organized the protest. "Mandatory minimums—they are wrong and they are evil."

The court still has to rule on the January 21 appeal against the sentence by Dixon, a Black high school student from Rome, Georgia. In May of last year Dixon, then 18, was convicted of statutory rape, a misdemeanor, and "aggravated child molestation," which carries a mandatory 10-year sentence, for having sex with a 15-year-old classmate. Dixon, who said the relationship was consensual, was acquitted on several other counts, including rape, false imprisonment, aggravated assault, and sexual battery.

Members of Dixon's family also addressed the rally, as did Atlanta mayor Shirley Franklin and students from his high school and from the Atlanta University Center. Participants came from cities across the state. They included many college and high school students.

Dixon's sentencing and the protests it has sparked have shone a spotlight on Georgia's barbaric and racist mandatory sentencing laws. The sentence stands despite the fact that the jury found Dixon not guilty on all charges involving the use of force.

Aggravated child molestation is one of the so-called seven deadly sins listed under Georgia Senate Bill 441. The others are murder, rape, armed robbery, aggravated sodomy, aggravated sexual battery, and voluntary manslaughter. All carry the 10-year minimum.

Bill 441 has often been combined with Bill 440, another draconian Georgia sentencing law requiring children of 13–17 years of age to be prosecuted as adults if they are charged with committing one of the "deadly sins."

Ninety percent of children sentenced under these two measures are Black, and serve their time in adult, not juvenile prisons.

Militant/William Arth

March 1 rally at state capitol in Atlanta was one of a number of protests against court decision to impose 10-year sentence on Black teenager Marcus Dixon with no chance of parole.

On hearing of the sentence, several members of the mostly white jury said they would not have convicted Dixon if they had known he would spend so much time in jail. "I think the law, this charge, was misapplied to Marcus," said juror Kathy Tippett, according to the Associated Press, referring to the fact that the aggravated child molestation charge is presented as a measure against so-called teenage predators who prey on children. "I mean, it's not meant for an 18-year-old having consensual sex. They misapplied it in this case, and I don't think it's right," she said.

Robert Williamson, another juror, echoed Tippet's sentiments. "We knew it wasn't rape," he told CBS News. "The pictures and her testimony, nothing added up to rape, forcible rape.

"I can honestly say, and talk for the other 10 jurors, that we had no intention of sending him to prison for 10 years," Williamson added. "We were sure he would go home that day."

The flagrant injustice of the sentencing has prompted protests from many quarters. State Rep. Tyrone Brooks and state Sen. Vincent Fort have spoken against it. The case was also featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show and HBO Real Sports hosted by Bryant Gumbel.

The Associated Press reported that 70 people gathered at the state Supreme Court January 20, the day before the court held a hearing on Dixon's appeal. "If Marcus Dixon were white, would we be here? If the young lady were black, would we be here?" the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, asked the crowd.

Several participants in the 1,000-strong March 1 rally spoke to *Militant* reporters about other cases of abuse by the police and the courts. Juanita Carter Taylor from the Waycross-Ware County branch of the NAACP said that her chapter was taking on cases of abuse in the local jail. "It's like there are two justice systems, one for the privileged and one for Blacks and the poor," she said.

Scotland: striking child nursery workers rally support in fight over wages, workload

BY HUGH ROBERTSON

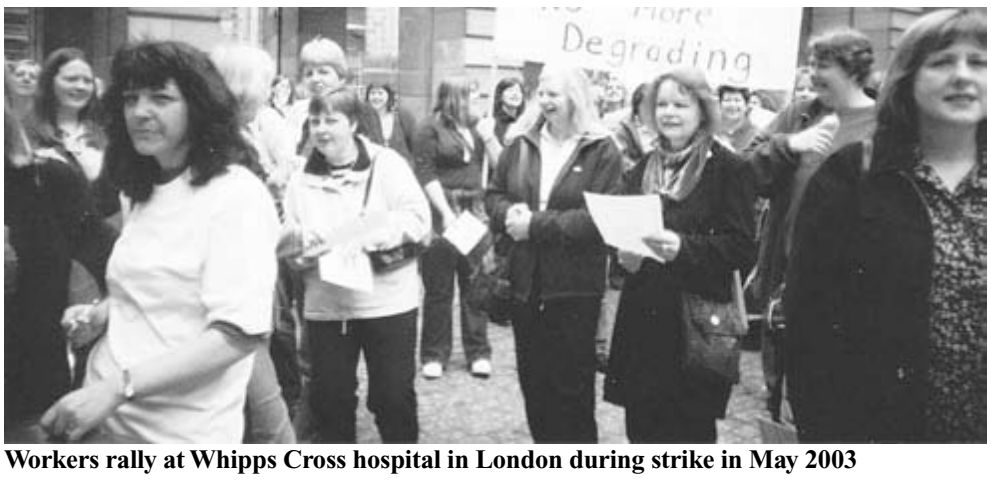
GLASGOW, Scotland—Some 2,000 nursery school nurses and supporters took part in a spirited march through the streets here March 5 to mark the end of their first week of all-out strike action. Dave Anderson, the president of the Unison union, which covers the strikers, told the rally at the end of the march, "If it is OK for teachers in the same nurseries to have a national [Scotland-wide] pay structure, then it is OK for our members."

Striker Carol Ball set the record straight on the unity of the workers in the walkout. Only about 300 of the 5,000 nurses who took strike action have signed contracts, she told the crowd. This is in contrast to media reports claiming that nine out of 32 local authorities have settled, suggesting a weakening of the strike.

The nurses are demanding a pay rise of around £4,000 per year (£1 = US$1.80), along with a review of the grading system that determines pay and benefits. The workers, who look after children of 3–5 years of age, explain that since 1988—the time of the last pay review—they have faced a considerable increase in workload and responsibilities.

Over the past 10 months, these nurses have built up to the Scotland-wide work stoppage with a series of one- and two-day strikes. They have also boycotted additional duties at work, and organized protests to build public support, especially among parents of nursery-age children.

The union's decision to move to all-out strike action was prompted by the refusal of the bosses, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), to negotiate a national settlement, and their insistence that local negotiations are the only way forward.



Workers rally at Whipps Cross hospital in London during strike in May 2003

In February, 81 percent of Unison members who sent in their ballots voted in favour of all-out strike action.

The strikers are gaining some support from other unions. Speaking at the rally, Fire Brigades Union national executive council member John McDonald said that collections at fire stations around the country had totaled £13,000 for the strike.

Four days later strikers and supporters took their struggle to the streets of Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, with a march of 800 people.

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'All-people's front' vs. working-class road

Continued from Page 10

Therefore, he argues, a "tactic" of supporting the Democratic Party in the elections is necessary for workers to "have their own political experience" and for communists not to be isolated from the masses.

To the contrary. The "political experience" of remaining tied to the Democratic wing of the exploiters' party has been a trap for working people. What our class needs is not dependence on the bosses but a truthful explanation and a political course that raises its class consciousness and trust in its own forces.

In reality, it's the capitalist minority that needs the support of working people, not the other way around (in fact, the majority of working people simply don't vote, because they don't see much difference in choosing between one or the other big-business party). The so-called all-people's coalition is "a coalition between the owners of American industry and finance, and… the professional ward-heelers and politicians who keep the [Democratic] party machinery oiled, and, on the other hand, the various trade union bureaucrats and leaders of protest movements in American society, whose job it is to bring out the ranks of the coalition at voting time to guarantee the continuance of the rule of this party as opposed to the Republican Party," said Jack Barnes in a 1965 debate with social democrat Stanley Aronowitz, published in the Pathfinder book *The Lesser Evil? Debates on the Democratic Party and Independent Working-Class Politics*. Barnes added that when dissatisfaction among working people toward Democratic politicians and the bipartisan system grows, "it's those boys who whip things into shape, who go to the workers, to the Negroes, to the socialists, and say, 'Look, it's in your class interests, it's in your interests as socialists, to come out and vote from this group, as a tactic'—in order, of course, to defeat the 'greater evil.'"

This is the same argument the Communist Party USA has promoted since the 1930s, after the party became Stalinized and abandoned Lenin's revolutionary course. And this election year, once again, we are warned by Stalinist, social democratic, and centrist groups that the Republican wolf, George W. Bush, is akin to "fascism" and that we should go running toward the Democratic fox—John Kerry or whoever gets nominated.

Explaining this revolutionary course is the opposite of sectarian isolation. Precisely because of the dissatisfaction among many workers that Brinton points to, there are greater opportunities than ever for communist workers to discuss a class-struggle perspective with fellow working-class militants as we join with them in battles against the bosses and other social struggles.

Working people and youth do have a clear class choice in the elections—the Socialist Workers candidates, who put forward a revolutionary working-class alternative to the twin capitalist parties of imperialist war, exploitation, racism, and depression. They will be campaigning over the coming months at union picket lines, factory gates, campuses, on the job, at labor and political actions. Joining with campaigners for the socialist alternative is one of the most effective ways to get a broader hearing for a working-class political perspective and to build a party that will be capable of leading workers and farmers to make a revolution in the United States and join the worldwide struggle for socialism.

THE MILITANT

Quebec smelter workers resist layoffs

BY SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELS, GRANT HARGRAVE, AND MICHEL PRAIRIE

SAGUENAY, Quebec—On January 27, 2,000 members of the National Union of Arvida Aluminum Employees (SNEAA) voted unanimously at their general assembly to take control of the four potlines of Alcan's Arvida smelter here and to continue production. The workers were responding to the January 22 announcement by Alcan, the world's largest aluminum producer, that it would shut down four of the smelter's potlines, eliminating 560 jobs. Unionists refused any order from the company that would lead to the closure of the lines.

For three weeks the 2,500 unionized workers organized to furnish the material necessary for the functioning of the potlines.

"We are fighting for the future of our youth; we have kept the plant alive," said Jeannot Boivin, 49, a worker on the potlines with 27 years seniority, when interviewed by a team of *Militant* correspondents that visited this area in mid-February.

The SNEAA is affiliated with the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), which is a member of the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (Quebec Federation of Labor - FTQ).

The Saguenay region has been hard hit economically. In early 2003 the Consomat food chain and the Laterrière Forestry Cooperative both went into bankruptcy, eliminating a total of nearly 1,000 jobs. In December the forestry giant Abitibi-Consolidated announced the closing of its Port Alfred pulp and paper mill in La Baie, a loss of 640 jobs. And in January Alcan announced the closing of the potlines here.

Saguenay, an important industrial and agricultural center, is located along the Saguenay River, two-and-a-half hours north of Quebec City. The morning that *Militant* correspondents arrived here four demonstrations were taking place. Workers reported that more than 100 workers from several unions demonstrated at the Chicoutimi Courthouse in support of the Alcan workers, whose union representatives were appearing before the Quebec Labor Relations Commission. Afterwards the demonstrators presented their demands to the Quebec Finance Minister, Yves Séguin, who was in town.

In nearby La Baie, 585 workers from Abitibi-Consolidated's Port Alfred mill, members of the National Union of Port Alfred Pulp and Paper Workers (SNTPPPA), symbolically escorted the trucks removing the last roles of paper produced in the plant before its shutdown in December.

Finally, 40 workers from the former LB sawmill at Lac-Bouchette, about an hour from Saguenay, demonstrated to protest the delays in reopening the mill.

Five thousand people join January 31 rally in solidarity with unionists at Arvida aluminum smelter in Saguenay, Quebec. Over the previous week the workers had taken control of four potlines tagged for closure by Alcan bosses.

The Alcan occupation

The shutdown of the four potlines was originally projected for a decade from now. The lines, which use Söderberg technology dating from the 1940s, produced 90,000 tons of aluminum annually, or 36 percent of the Arvida plant's output.

Alcan had offered the 560 workers affected by the shutdown early retirement and transfers to other departments. But in a region already hard hit by plant closings, the union explained, the workers are fighting for opportunities for young people.

The SNEAA is demanding the replacement of the Söderberg potlines, or the construction of new aluminum fabrication facilities.

In a statement widely reported in the press, SNEAA president Claude Patry said, "Arvida's workers control the entire chain of production—from the arrival of the bauxite at the La Baie port facilities to the potlines, to the Vaudreuil chemical plant, that converts the bauxite into alumina, the railway system and the hydro-electric installations."

Speaking to *Militant* reporters, Jeannot Boivin described how the occupation was carried out on the Söderberg potline where he works replenishing the alumina in the pots and installing the pot linings, a job that is done while the pots are in operation. His job takes him inside the pots where the alumina, a bauxite derivative, is transformed into aluminum. Because of the extreme heat and danger of overexposure to carcinogenic fumes, he can only work for 20 minutes at a stretch, followed by 40-minute breaks.

Boivin said he visited the rest areas to talk to other workers. "I told them, 'It takes real discipline. The work has to be done safely. The results have to be the same as if the company were here.'" He added, "It is the Söderberg workers who were under pressure, but they had the support of all the other departments and the SNEAA.

"The foremen hung around taking notes on safety; they wanted to use this against us. In 27 years, it was the first time that I saw them worry so much about safety!

"They asked us for our production reports, but if they raised anything else, our answer was: 'No. We're the ones who decide. We ask for your collaboration for specific requirements and for the raw materials. This is essential for the workers' safety.'"

Boivin explained that, "with the help of the maintenance workers we were able to quickly eliminate all the high-risk situations. We now have serious questions about the goodwill of Alcan in health and safety. Under the bosses' control it was the well-being of the pots that came first, but now, under union control, it's the well-being of the workers and their safety that comes first. There's not a ladder or catwalk missing, and the columns and floors have been repaired. We did all that without the supervisors—and to think that we might have waited six months or a year for the same results."

On January 31 some 5,000 workers demonstrated in support of the Alcan workers. They included contingents from different union federations from throughout region, including 400 workers and their families from the Port Alfred mill.

The stakes in the 200 megawatts

In response to the plant occupation, the company won an injunction against the workers from the Labor Relations Commission. This injunction included heavy fines for the workers individually and the union. Negotiations continued between the union and the company, however, without the injunction being enforced. At the beginning of February the provincial government named a special mediator.

On February 8 the union executive came to a pact with the company that included new guarantees and a promise from Alcan to invest $10 million in the Arvida plant.

At the union meeting called to vote on this agreement union members learned that Alcan would sell the 200 megawatts of electricity saved by the shutdown of the potlines to aluminum plants outside of Saguenay. Workers report that the offer was then rejected unanimously and the unionists demanded that the money saved be used to finance a new plant, and that the 200 megawatts be kept for use in the region.

The 200 megawatts at stake are generated by Alcan's own dams a few kilometers from the Arvida complex. They were built in the 1930s and 1940s with the help of large government subsidies. When the Quebec government in 1962 nationalized the electrical industry, an action widely supported by the population of Quebec, which saw it as taking control of part of the national patrimony, Alcan's hydroelectric installations in Saguenay were not included.

Following the February 10 membership meeting, the union called for the nationalization of Alcan's hydroelectric installations in the Saguenay-Lac St. Jean regions.

Faced with the rejection of the agreement and the continued occupation, Alcan called on the courts to enforce the Labor Relations Commission's injunction against the strikers. On February 13 the Commission declared the action taken by the Arvida workers and their union constituted an illegal strike.

The SNEAA executive then recommended a return to work under the same conditions as before the occupation. Some 2,000 workers approved this proposal at union meetings on February 16 and 17, but again rejected the company's proposals and mandated their executive to continue the negotiations with Alcan to protect workers affected by the shutdown of the potlines, and to seek company guarantees that the money it saves is reinvested in the region, as well as the 200 megawatts of power.

Struggle against paper mill shutdown

Another important struggle in the area has been the resistance by workers to the closure of the Port Alfred pulp and paper mill by Abitibi-Consolidated.

On December 10, the company had announced the indefinite shutdown of its Port Alfred pulp and paper mill and another in Lufkin, Texas. With its 640 workers the mill was one of the main employers in La Baie. The company blamed the mill's high production costs, overproduction, and the recent rise in the value of the Canadian dollar against other currencies. In the last four years the mill has been closed a total of 26 weeks.

"Before it was the youth who left, today it's people like us. My grandfather worked there, my father worked there. I never thought that I would shut down the mill," said Camille Gilbert, a paper machine operator with 27 years of experience at the mill. *Militant* correspondents met him after the demonstration organized by the SNTPPPA the morning of February 13. The SNTPPPA is affiliated with the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN).

The evening of the December 14 shutdown 1,500 people met at the mill's main entrance to greet the last shift to leave. Two days later a demonstration called by students of the La Baie high school in collaboration with the union drew 3,000.

Farmers demonstrated their solidarity December 23 as well as to protest the effects of the "mad-cow" crisis on milk and beef producers. Some 400 people participated in the event in front of the mill.

On March 10 more than 3,000 people, including farmers and Alcan workers from the Arvida smelter, demonstrated in La Baie in support of the Port Alfred workers' ongoing fight for the reopening of the mill.

UK coal miners stage work stoppage

BY JANE OWEN

KELLINGLEY, North Yorkshire—Some 350 workers at a Kellingley pit staged a 24-hour strike March 8 to oppose the mine owner's plan to introduce longer hours under the banner of "flexible working."

The proposal by UK Coal would include compulsory nine-hour shifts, 12-hour night shifts, work on weekends, and an increase in the pit's operating schedule from 95 to 145 hours a week. At the picket line Chris Kitchen, the Kellingley branch secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), told *Militant* reporters, "We know if we accept these changes they'll come back for more—this is just the start of it."

Kitchen explained that the longer hours pose safety problems, because many of the miners travel long distances from other areas where pits have been closed. He recalled that four years ago two miners had been killed in a head-on collision during their two-hour drive home to Wigan, Lancashire. They had been pressured to work a 12-hour nightshift. Others among the 35 pickets said the bosses had sped the work up dramatically since they had begun working there 20 years earlier. New, faster machinery meant more dust, they said, and longer hours would mean more exposure to the dust. Workers noted that only a few weeks earlier one miner had been diagnosed with black lung disease (pneumoconiosis).

UK Coal representatives have said the longer hours will allow them to provide jobs for 240 of the 2,000 miners they will force out of work when they close the three pits at the nearby Selby mine complex.

The NUM had a different proposal to provide jobs for the laid-off miners, said Kitchen, who noted that miners would be happy for the Selby miners to join them. Rather than extend the hours, the union proposed that a new coal face be opened at Kellingley. One miner also told us that the gangs were short of labor and could do with reinforcements. Kitchen said the Kellingley miners had pushed back a previous attempt by UK Coal to force through its "flexible working" demands. At that time the bosses had said the longer hours would provide jobs for miners from the closed Prince of Wales pit in nearby Pontefract. "We knew this was a hollow victory—we knew they'd come back for more," he said.

The union secretary pointed out that UK Coal had forced miners in Maltby, another Yorkshire pit, to swallow the new conditions under threat of losing their jobs. According to a March 10 BBC report, the NUM has suspended a series of further 24-hour strikes at other UK Coal pits while it seeks a High Court injunction against the company.